UQ biologist snares river award

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A SYSTEM that will help protect Australia’s waterways has won a Queensland scientist a prestigious national conservation award.

University of Queensland research fellow Simon Linke has been awarded the River-symposium Young Water Scientist Award for innovation in water conservation and management.

Dr Linke has developed a system to meet the conservation needs of waterways with the least amount of impact on other stakeholders, such as farmers and irrigators.

“Traditionally when people wanted to allocate conservation or restoration projects they would just take what was available or not really think about the entire suite of outcomes they wanted to achieve,” he said.

Using mathematical modelling, Dr Linke is developing a computer program to identify rivers at risk and help landowners manage their waterways.

Dr Linke said river management was a major challenge.

“By all projections, water will become more scarce and it will be even more important to really target conservation action in a meaningful way,” he said.

The International River-symposium, held this week in Brisbane, brought together 800 experts to discuss the state of the world’s rivers.

Dr Ger Bergkamp from the World Conservation Union said human impact on rivers had caused extensive damage and politicians needed to take the lead on river conservation.

“Clearly, there’s a need for further political will and listening much better to their constituencies of the importance of what you could call a ‘river ethic,’” he said.

“Australia has a fantastic appreciation of the environmental values it has — what we need is leadership from our politicians.”

Dr Linke said this was the first time the $3000 award had been presented to a conservation biologist.

For more information go to www.riversymposium.com